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Proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005

Programme 22
Palestine refugees

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* A/55/50.

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Overall orientation

22.1 The overall purpose of this programme is to assist the Palestine refugee population living in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank and Gaza Strip until there is an eventual resolution of the Palestine refugee issue. That assistance involves the provision of essential education, health and relief and social services to eligible Palestine refugees. Also provided under the programme is emergency relief assistance to the beneficiary population and response to requests from the Palestinian Authority, host Governments and the Secretary-General as they arise, commensurate with available resources.

22.2 The mandate for the programme, which is the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), is General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, which established UNRWA as a separate entity within the United Nations system. The mandate of UNRWA has been renewed repeatedly, most recently by the Assembly in its resolution 53/46 of 3 December 1998, when it was extended until June 2002. In its resolution 3331 (XXIX) B of 17 December 1974, the Assembly decided that, with effect from 1 January 1975, the expenses for salaries of international staff in the service of UNRWA that would otherwise be a charge on voluntary contributions should be financed by the regular budget of the United Nations for the duration of the Agency's mandate.

22.3 UNRWA reports directly to the General Assembly. Overall review of UNRWA programmes and activities is undertaken by the 10-member Advisory Commission, which includes representatives of the Agency's major donors and host Governments. The Advisory Commission has a working relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

22.4 The Agency's concern is for the self-reliance of the refugee community. The long-term viability of its programmes and sustainability are key themes of its activities. Where feasible and desirable, UNRWA will continue to incorporate cost-sharing and self-support measures into its regular programmes in order to ensure the efficient use of resources and to support participation by the beneficiary population in the provision of Agency services.

Objectives

22.5 The objectives of the programme are:

(a) To meet the basic educational needs of Palestine refugees and to enhance their educational and employment opportunities;

(b) To meet the Palestine refugees' basic health needs and to improve the overall state of health of their community;

(c) To support those Palestine refugees who suffer the greatest socio-economic disadvantage and to facilitate their self-reliance;

(d) To improve the quality of life of small and micro-entrepreneurs, sustain jobs, decrease unemployment and provide income-generating opportunities to needy men and women through the provision of credit;

(e) To improve infrastructure and socio-economic conditions in the Agency's five areas of operation.

Strategy

22.6 The overall strategy for meeting the programme objectives will involve the provision of:

(a) Education services, including general, vocational/technical and teacher education for Palestine refugees, within the framework of the prescribed curricula of the host Governments and the Palestinian Authority, in accordance with the needs of the refugees, their identity and cultural heritage and consistent with the standards of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

(b) Health services, to protect, preserve and promote the health status of registered Palestine refugees and to meet their basic health needs, consistent with the basic principles and concepts of the World Health Organization as well as with the standards achieved by the public health sectors in the Agency's areas of operation;

(c) Relief and social services, in pursuit of a policy of developmental social welfare towards service facilitation and promotion of self-reliance among the Palestine refugee community, to meet their needs, maintain a reasonable standard of existence and improve their capacity to become self-reliant.

22.7 Under its project implementation programme, UNRWA anticipates continuing to undertake projects to

improve infrastructure and socio-economic conditions in its five areas of operation, in accordance with the needs of the refugee population and to the extent permitted by donor funds. Projects are currently an integral part of the Agency's programme of activities. They are the means by which it covers nearly all of its capital costs (school construction, upgrading of health centres, etc.), as well as various key service-related non-recurrent costs (environmental health improvements, rehabilitation of shelters, etc.). They also enable UNRWA to supplement its regular budget allocations in key areas such as hospitalization.

22.8 Under the income-generation programme, UNRWA will maintain the best practices of the microfinance industry by adhering to the standards established for the industry. It would also attempt to achieve international standards of efficiency and outreach in a way that provided cost-effective services to clients in a sustainable manner.

22.9 UNRWA has continuously adapted its role and services in keeping with the needs of the refugees and the changing environment in which it operates. In its long history in the area, the Agency has demonstrated a capacity to adapt and enhance its programmes as required to cope with developments in the region, and it stands ready to continue to do so in accordance with the mandate it receives from the General Assembly.

22.10 The Agency's ability to carry out its work programme depends on voluntarily contributed funds being made available to it by the international community. UNRWA faces a major challenge in maintaining the level of its services within those resources. Measures to streamline its operations and to achieve cost savings through productivity gains where appropriate will be emphasized.

Expected accomplishments

22.11 Expected accomplishments would include:

(a) Improvement of the quality of education provided to the Palestine refugee population at all levels, including maintaining an environment conducive to learning through upgrading and construction of facilities and enhancing the skills and competencies of the Agency's teaching and training staff;

(b) Improvement of the overall state of health of the Palestine refugee population and reduction of environmental health problems in their camps;

(c) Reduced dependence of Palestine refugees on relief and social service assistance in meeting their basic needs, in maintaining a reasonable standard of living and in improving their capacity to become self-reliant;

(d) Expansion of the Agency's income-generation programme;

(e) Improved infrastructure and socio-economic conditions in the Agency's five areas of operation, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Indicators of achievement

22.12 Indicators of achievement would include:

(a) The maintenance of relatively high pupil pass rates and low pupil drop-out rates in basic education as compared with institutions run by host authorities;

(b) The adaptation and improvement of course content and curriculum in vocational training institutions to meet changing market conditions;

(c) Response to changes in demand for education facilities in keeping with demographic and other factors;

(d) The number of additional educational facilities or other infrastructural facilities constructed or renovated;

(e) A reduction in infant mortality rates;

(f) The maintenance of high immunization rates;

(g) An increased percentage of shelters with safe indoor water facilities and shelters connected to proper sewage facilities;

(h) The number of individuals belonging to certain marginalized groups within the Palestine refugee community whose socio-economic status had improved;

(i) The number of participants in the income-generation programme;

(j) The number of projects completed.

Legislative mandates

Programme 22
Palestine refugees

General Assembly resolutions

302 (IV)	Assistance to Palestine refugees
53/46	
54/69	